



**Public Safety Newsletter**  
**July/August 2011**

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Recently I, along with the seven members of County Council, sent a letter in a collaborative effort to urge the state Legislature to address issues concerning 911 state funding. These issues included increasing land-line and telephone surcharges earmarked for 911 funding; developing a better process for distributing cell-phone surcharge funds to counties; and allowing counties to use surcharge funds to cover 911-related costs that the state currently will not reimburse. This letter was sent to Senator Jane Earll, and State Reps. Patrick Harkins, Flo Fabrizio, John Hornaman, Curt Sonney, and John Evans.

The letter expressed that the amount the County is spending on 911 has jumped significantly in the last five years and it will be challenging to keep the center operating. Attention must be brought to this issue because costs are going up and revenues are going down. Most funding for the 911 center is covered by the state, mainly through the land-line and cell phone surcharges; however, across the state, those surcharges are either declining or unpredictable. Right now, customers are assessed a \$1.25 fee per month for land line telephones and \$1.00 per month for cell phones. Land line use has decreased immensely in recent years and the cell phone money is distributed to counties unevenly. The state also caps wage and fringe benefit reimbursements related to 911 operations at 70 percent. The County must pick up the remaining costs and in 2010, this meant an additional \$450,000 in spending for Erie County.

It is the hope that sending this letter to the state Legislature will bring the concerns of the County regarding funding for the 911 Center to the forefront of their thinking. With a lot of work and some much needed luck, these issues can be reviewed and legislation brought up to date and in line with the current economic conditions.

On a side note, please make sure to check out a new section in the newsletter, "In the Spotlight", where we are showcasing Lake City Fire Company this month. The Lake City Fire Department volunteer firefighters continue to do an excellent job in providing fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to the 4200 citizens they serve.



**Barry Grossman, Erie County Executive**



Todd R. Geers,  
Director , Public  
Safety  
Photo courtesy of  
Jack Hanrahan, Erie  
Times News

Public Safety is pleased to present another insightful newsletter to share information, discuss current and future projects, and acknowledge our accomplishments, thereby enhancing the strong working relationship amongst Public Safety, our user agencies, and the citizens of Erie County.

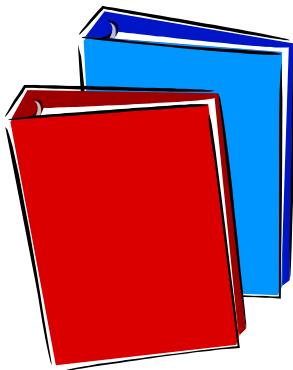
Due to declining revenue from landline phone fees, Public Safety is facing a budget shortfall projection for 2012, and possibly onwards. Therefore, I have decided not to pursue a new, single-frequency, county-wide, voice radio system at this time. Our current three-band radio system is not ideal in terms of interoperability; however, the system works and we are able to patch any frequency together for interoperability.

A mantra I firmly believe and frequently state is "Do more with less." This principle guides our daily efforts to continually improve our processes and deliver a better service while saving money for the county. Our "Do more with less" plan for our voice radio system involves numerous initiatives to improve our current system: analyze the RF footprint needs for low-band, leverage new technology to replace old concepts, install power amplifiers to increase output wattage, add PL tones to eliminate interference, and create talk groups more appropriate to how we operate in Erie County.

For the past year, Public Safety worked diligently to stabilize fire dispatch protocols within CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch), to include updated CAD run cards for fire departments and a major software upgrade to improve the CAD-to-ProQA (Emergency medical dispatch question protocol program) interface. Now our attention turns to enhancing and perfecting the police dispatch protocols. I am very pleased to share that the leadership of the Erie Police Department embraces this exciting challenge. More to follow in the months ahead as our working group of Telecommunicators, Shift Commanders, Erie Police Officers and Officers-in-charge brainstorm and flowchart their way to excellence in police dispatch.

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### Police Radio Procedures Manual



With training completed in June and July for all law enforcement agencies and dispatchers, Erie County now employs a standard protocol governing law enforcement radio dispatch procedures. Following a successful launch of the related Fire Radio Procedures Manual in May for all fire departments dispatched by the Department of Public Safety, the Police Radio Procedures Manual went live on July 30<sup>th</sup>. A working group of agency representatives and dispatchers developed the Manual over a period of six months. Benefits of using a standard dispatch model include reduced radio traffic, defined radio cadence, improved situational awareness, elimination of agency-specific code words, and the ability for dispatchers to do more with less as we prepare for future county-wide consolidation.

## 800 MHz Data Radio System



The Department of Public Safety is one step closer to issuing computers for police cruisers throughout Erie County. This month bids were received from vendors vying to win a contract to outfit police cars with the specially configured computers, referred to as Mobile Data Terminals (MDT). MDTs will greatly enhance situational awareness and productivity of officers by allowing access to the law enforcement record management system and field-based reporting, access to national crime databases for retrieving warrants and license plate registrations, messaging between officers, and an advanced dispatch functionality called "silent dispatch."

A second component of the project is installing 800 MHz base stations on select antenna towers throughout the county. Currently one site exists to support MDTs in use by Erie PD and Millcreek PD. The additional six sites will offer hi-speed data radio to all law enforcement agencies in the county. A third and final component of the overall project is fortification of our radio system by laying fiber optic cable at critical radio infrastructure hubs. A target completion date is set for December 23, 2011.

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## Hazardous Materials Training

Public-private partnership reaps benefits for all! Conducted over a two-weekend period in May and June 2011, Erie County Hazardous Materials Team and DuPont Chemicals held a 50-hour Hazmat Technician course at the Public Safety Building on Flower Road. This course provided the knowledge and skills necessary for technician-level response of hazardous material incidents such as chemical spills and weapons of mass destruction. Students were also instructed on the role hazmat plays in the Incident Command System, communication systems, and chemistry in the field. Eighteen students attended the course.



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Lake City Fire Company



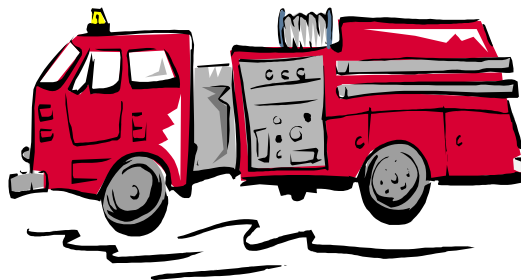
Submitted by:  
Marvin Waxham, Jr.  
Fire Chief  
Lake City Fire Company

The twenty-four volunteer firefighters of the Lake City Fire Company provide Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services to the approximately 4200 residents of the Borough of Lake City and the northern portion of Girard Township. In addition, the Lake City Fire Company is recognized by The Pennsylvania Voluntary Rescue Service Recognition (VRSR) Program as a Type 3A Swift Water / Flood Evacuation Team.

June is always a busy month for the Fire Company with preparations for the Annual Carnival held on Father's Day weekend. The "curse of the carnival" is remembered at the station each year – that being, there always seems to be a larger than normal or unusual incident during the week of carnival set-up, and on Monday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, the curse lived on ... at 15:15 hrs, Erie County 911 dispatched the 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment for the commercial structure fire at the Girard School District Bus Garage at 2556 Maple Ave in Lake City Borough.

Firefighters at Station 56 setting up for the carnival responded with Engine 563 and arrived on scene five minutes after dispatch. They reported the 50' x 230' building well involved and multiple school buses fully involved inside the building. As the crew from E563 advanced the BlitzFire line and a 2-1/2 handline, Command requested two additional Engine Companies, an additional RIT team and a heavy duty wrecker to assist with the buses that would need to be overhauled. As other companies arrived, additional handlines were placed in service. Within thirty minutes, the fire was knocked down but most of the thirteen buses involved were still burning. All crews worked for over four hours to completely extinguish the fire.

The Lake City Fire Company would like to give a "Job Well Done" to Dispatchers Jack Carter, Dan Palka, Brandon Schultz, Josh Ely, Jim Bright, and Rob Collins for their efforts on this incident. We would also like to thank all the departments that worked on the scene or were transferred to cover for the committed companies.



## Active Shooter Training



Erie County Department of Public Safety will host an APCO-certified Active Shooter Incidents for Public Safety Communications course on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup>. Sponsored by the Northwest PA Terrorism Task Force, the class is open to public safety professionals from the 5-county NW region.

Active shooter incidents pose unique concerns to public safety professionals. There are a multitude of issues that make responding to an active shooter incident more difficult than other armed subject calls or violent, in-progress incidents. As with any other emergency situation, the 9-1-1 Telecommunicator plays a vital role in the response to active shooter incidents. This course educates Telecommunicators on the many intricate issues and challenges posed by active shooter incidents and the role the Telecommunicator plays in each.





## REVERSE 911®



When a citizen needs a police, fire, or medical response to an emergency, naturally the citizen will call 9-1-1. When the public safety professionals at 9-1-1 need to call citizens, what do they do?! They use REVERSE 911®.

REVERSE 911® is an emergency notification system which facilitates fast and effective communication within the public sector. This nationally acclaimed software application seamlessly combines mapping and database technologies, enabling law enforcement, fire/EMS, and emergency management personnel to visually identify, then automatically alert hundreds or thousands of people inside certain geographic locations. It also provides simple, yet highly efficient, notification of personnel, volunteers and others, quickly mobilizing them for emergency response.

Erie County Department of Public Safety recently received training on the administration and use of REVERSE 911®. In the near future we will gladly offer other county departments and agencies the opportunity to create call-out groups in REVERSE 911®. Stay tuned!

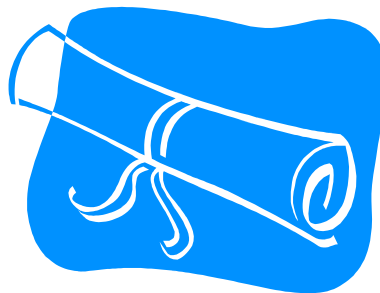


## Communication Training Officer

Training! Training! Training! A robust training program produces 9-1-1 call-taking and dispatching success. New Telecommunicators learn the basic skills required of a Call-taker in our 160-hour Basic Academy. Taught in-house by an industry certified instructor, all new hires learn call-processing fundamentals, Erie County geography, public safety equipment (such as CAD, Catalyst radio controller, and Sentinel IP-based telephony), and the National Incident Management System, to name just a few of the topics taught.

Upon completing the Basic Academy, Telecommunicators are paired with a Communication Training Officer (CTO) for extensive on-the-job training in the dispatch center. The role of the CTO is a highly critical link in the training process, whereby experienced Telecommunicators impart their knowledge and shape the growth of new Telecommunicators.

The CTO program is so important to our overall success that we recently revamped the entire program. Current CTO designations were rescinded, volunteers were sought, and all CTOs will undergo a 3-day formal training course this month. In addition, CTOs will be armed with a daily guidebook of activities and functions to perform with their trainees and CTOs will receive a training supplement to their hourly wages.



### Congratulations to our new CTOs!

Jennifer Waxham  
Ben Cardot  
Chandra Light  
James Donnell  
Dan Palka

Brian Mankowski  
Zach Criscione  
Matt Scowden  
Ryne Rutkowski  
David Knight